

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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SIL-01 EUR-25 SS-20 NSC-10 DRC-01 /123 W

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R 090600Z NOV 73

FM AMCONSUL SYDNEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4971

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

CONFIDENTIAL SYDNEY 2576

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AS

SUBJ: NEW SOUTH WALES GENERAL ELECTION

REF: SYDNEY 2557

SUMMARY: LABOR COUNCIL DENOUNCES PREMIER ASKIN'S PROPOSED ANTI-STRIKE EMERGENCY LEGISLATION WHILE TRYING TO COPE WITH COMMUNIST INSPIRED BUILDERS LABORERS STRIKE WHICH THREATENS TO BECOME NATIONAL.

1. FOLLOWING A SERIES OF MEETINGS, THE NEW SOUTH WALES LABOR COUNCIL LAST NIGHT ISSUED A STATEMENT WARNING THAT IF PREMIER ASKIN ATTEMPTS TO GO AHEAD WITH HIS PROMISE TO LEGISLATE EMERGENCY POWERS TO PROTECT PUBLIC INTERESTS IN THE VENT OF INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES, THIS WILL PROVOKE COMBINED MASSIVE LABOR ACTION FROM THROUGHOUT THE STATE INCLUDING ALL SECTORS OF INDUSTRY AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE. THIS REACTION WAS PREDICTABLE. HOWEVER, THE FINAL LINES ON WHICH THE ISSUE WILL BE FOUGHT OUT IN THE ELECTION ARE NOT REPEAT NOT YET CLEAR. THERE IS STILL CONFUSION ON ASKIN'S OWN MEANING, BUT ALP NATURALLY IS ASSUMING THE WORST SINCE THIS PROVIDES A BETTER TARGET. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS STILL WIDELY AGREED THAT LIBERAL/COUNTRY PARTY

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COALITION GOVERNMENT WILL BE RETURNED TO OFFICE WITH

AN INCREASED MAJORITY.

2. THE EMERGENCY POWERS QUESTION MAY BE FURTHER DRAMATIZED NEXT WEEK BY THE SPREADING INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE INVOLVING THE NSW BRANCH OF THE BUILDERS LABORERS FEDERATION AND THE EMPLOYERS. IN RECENT MONTHS THIS UNION TOTALLY CONTROLLED BY THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA HAS CAPTURED INCREASING ATTENTION, MUCH OF IT FAVORABLE, BY EXPLOITING THE ECOLOGY ISSUE. THE UNION HAS REFUSED TO WORK ON NUMEROUS CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS WHICH ALLEGEDLY IMPERIL EITHER NATURAL OR TRADITIONAL TREASURES OF SYDNEY. HAVING REFUSED TO WORK FOR SEVERAL DAYS, THEY RETURNED TO WORK ON SELECTED PROJECTS TWO DAYS AGO. THE EMPLOYERS, HOWEVER, REFUSED TO AGREE THAT THE UNION HAS THE RIGHT TO DECIDE SELECTIVELY WHICH PROJECTS IT WILL WORK AND WHICH IT WILL NOT WORK. AS A RESULT THE WORKERS WERE DENIED ENTRY AND THIS HAS BEEN LABELED A "LOCK OUT". 18 BUILDERS LABORERS WERE ARRESTED FOR TRESPASSING.

3. UNFORTUNATELY BUT PREDICTABLY THE "LORV OUT" ISSUE HAS RALLIED GREAT SUPPORT TO THE BUILDERS LABORERS UNION WHICH PREVIOUSLY HAD BEEN ISOLATED BOTH FROM THE MODERATE NSW LABOR COUNCIL AND FROM ITS OWN FEDERAL HEADQUARTERS WHICH IS ALIGNED WITH THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA (PRO-MOSCOW AND ANTI-CPA). NSW LABOR COUNCIL IS IN THE DIFFICULT POSITION TODAY OF HAVING TO OPPOSE PREMIER ASKIN'S CAMPAIGN PROMISE OF EMERGENCY LEGISLATION AND OF HAVING TO OPPOSE A "LOCK OUT", WHILE AT THE SAME TIME TRYING TO RE-ISOLATE THE LOCAL COMMUNIST DOMINATED BUILDERS LABORERS FEDERATION. MEANWHILE THE FEDERAL HEADQUARTERS OF THE BUILDERS LABORERS UNION HAS INDICATED THAT IF THE STRIKE IS NOT SETTLED OVER THE WEEKEND, IT WILL BECOME NATIONWIDE EFFECTIVE NEXT TUESDAY MIDNIGHT.

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